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NEXT ISSUE:
Speaking in Tongues: the influence of culture on religious art and architecture.

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CONTENTS

FEATURES

Kabbalah and Architecture
By Alexander Gorlin, FAIA 6

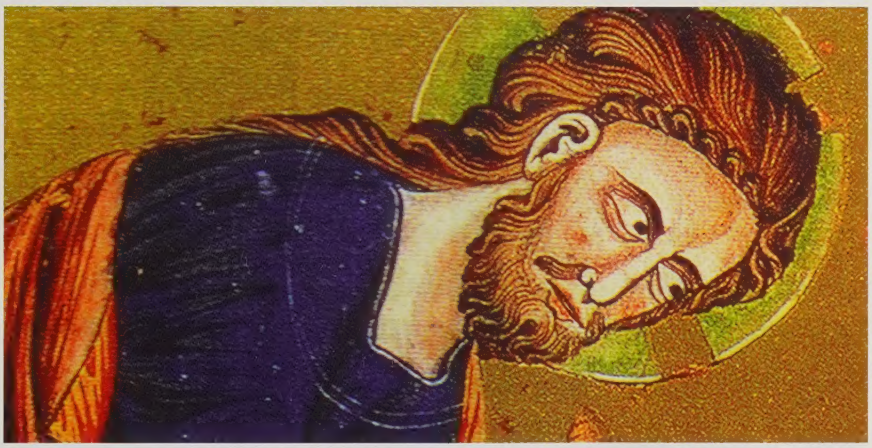
From Gym to Gem
The Interior Renovation of St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church
By William H. Geier, AIA 12

Wilson Chapel
A New Meetinghouse for a School 'Set on a Hill'
By Mark S. Burrows 16

Architect's Commentary on Wilson Chapel
By Brett Donham 19

Primal Symbols in Sacred Spaces
By Barbara Howington 21

A Dynamic Partnership: Architects and Fundraisers
By Robert I. Evans 24



ON THE COVER:
God as the architect of the universe, frontispiece of the Bible Moralisée (c.1250). Alexander Gorlin's article on the Kabbalah and architecture begins on page 6.

DEPARTMENTS

Editor's Page 4
Notes & Comments 26
Artist/Artisan Directory 30
Architects Directory 33
Just One More Thing 35

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

Bendheim 5
Botti Studio of Architectural Arts, Inc. 29
C.M. Almy 25
Faith & Form/IFRAA Awards Program 11
Faith & Form Subscription Form 29
Franck & Lohsen Architects 36
J. Sussman 33
Marianna Thomas Architects 29
Meyer Vogelpohl 35
Rambusch Lighting 4
R. Geissler, Inc. 35
Rohlf's Stained & Leaded Glass 20
The Guild 20
The Verdin Company 29
Willet Hauser 2
Yale Institute of Sacred Music 15

Awards and Collaboration



Editor's Page ✶ Michael J. Crosbie

Celebrating the best in religious art and architecture is an important part of mission of *Faith & Form*. By recognizing the achievements of artists, architects, designers, and others who create worship environments, we believe that the standard of art and architecture can be raised and kept high.

We encourage you to enter the *Faith & Form* / IFRAA International Awards Program for Religious Art and Architecture. The annual awards program is co-sponsored by *Faith & Form* and the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art and Architecture (IFRAA), a knowledge community of the American Institute of Architects. The awards program was founded in 1978 with the goal of honoring the best in architecture, liturgical design, and art for religious spaces. The program offers four primary categories for awards: Religious Architecture, Liturgical/Interior Design, Sacred Landscape, and Religious Arts. Award recipients receive an awards certificate presented at an annual awards event, full-page coverage in *Faith & Form's* Annual Awards Issue, and exhibition of the award-winning projects at the AIA National Convention.

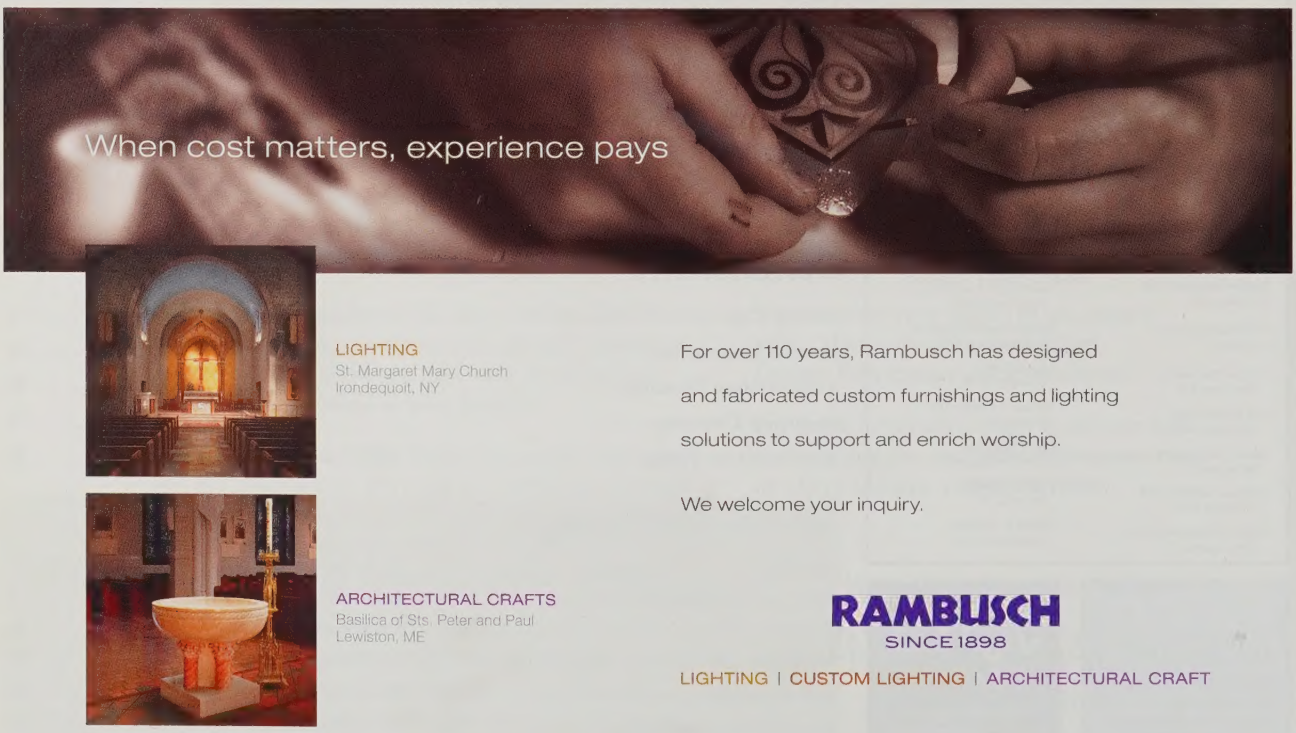
The awards program is open to architects, landscape architects, designers, artists, and liturgical consultants worldwide. The deadline for the 2008 awards program is fast approaching, so please register by July 1. Award submissions are due July 18. Awards submission materials and more information can be found on our website: www.faithandform.com.

There is power is numbers, and collaboration with other publications offers the possibility of reaching a wider audience. That's why we at *Faith & Form* are very happy to announce a new collaboration with the Italian publication *Chiesa Oggi*, one of Europe's leading international journals of religious art and architecture. Published by Di Baio Editore, with Giuseppe Maria Jonghi Lavarini as Editor-in-Chief, *Chiesa Oggi (Church Today)* covers the latest developments in religious art and architecture from new work to the restoration and preservation of historic places of worship.

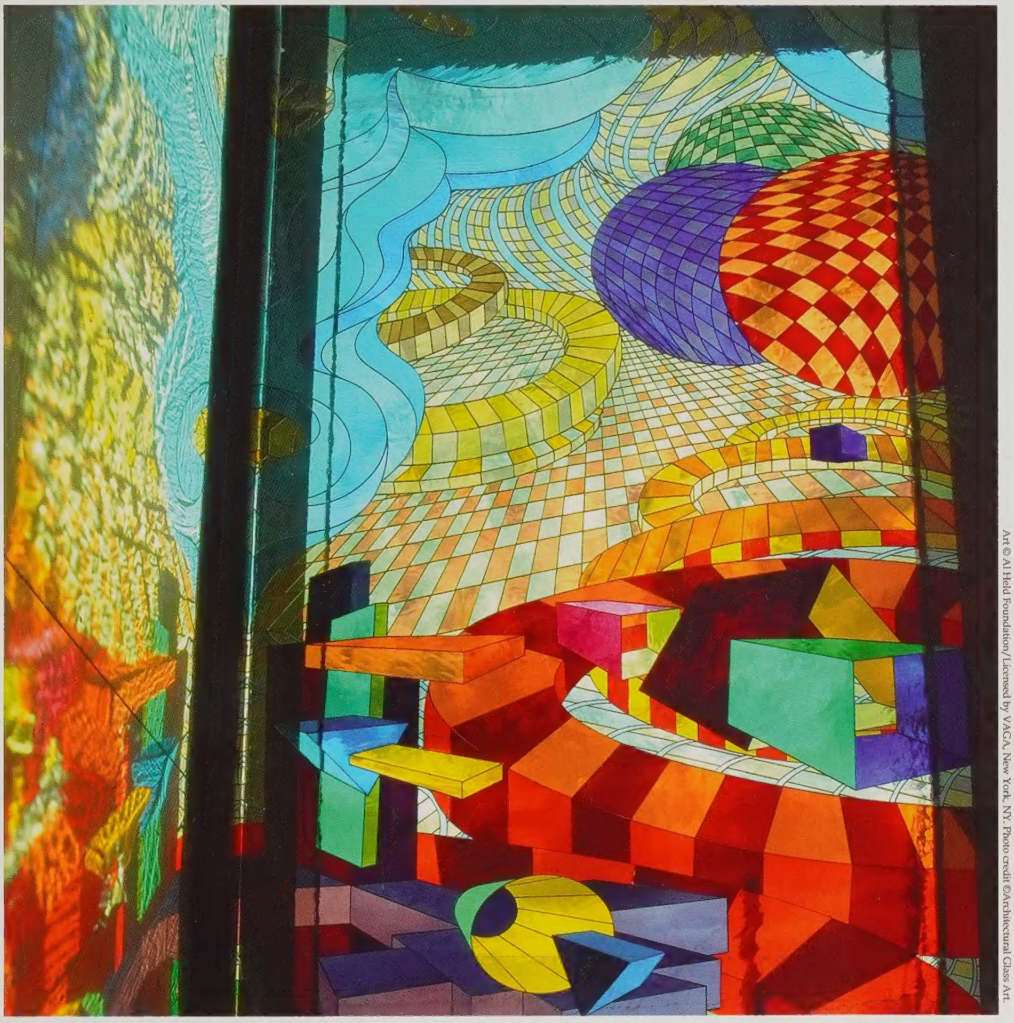
As a first step in the collaboration, *Faith & Form* and *Chiesa Oggi* have linked our websites, with information on our respective award programs and of other awards. The winners of the prestigious Fondazione Frate Sole International Prize of Sacred Architecture, selected in October, will be published in *Faith & Form's* 2008 Annual Awards issue. *Faith & Form* will also publish the results of the awards program of the Italian Bishops' Conference. *Chiesa Oggi* is currently identifying the best designed and built examples of integration of photovoltaic systems in church or church-related buildings. *Faith & Form* hopes to bring these projects to our readers, as well.

Further collaboration with *Chiesa Oggi* might result in a joint subscription program and delivering to our advertisers a greater audience for their services and products. There may also be opportunities for conducting jointly sponsored conferences on religious art and architecture. We welcome this opportunity for collaboration, and we are sure that our joint efforts will continue to raise the quality of religious environments around the world.

Michael J. Crosbie is the Editor-in-Chief of *Faith & Form* and can be reached by email at mcrosbie@faithandform.com


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Kabbalah and Architecture

By Alexander Gorlin, FAIA



Louis Kahn's Salk Institute expresses Kabbalaistic themes.

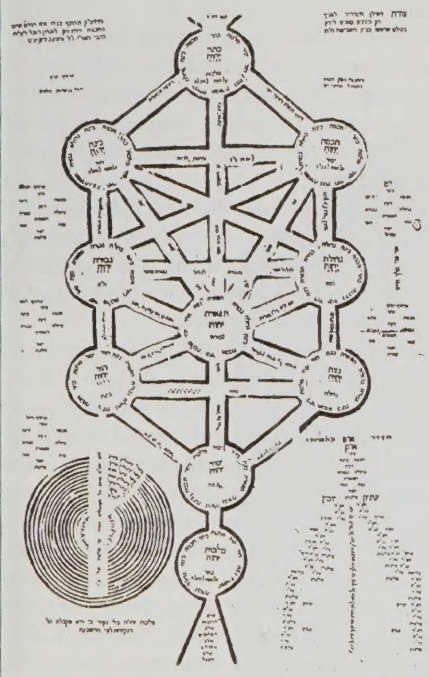


Kabbalah, the mystical aspect of Judaism, dates back to the Middle Ages. It means tradition in Hebrew: what is received, and was ignored with the rise of a more rational Rabbinic Judaism in the 19th century. It is theosophy, a theory of the elaborate structure of the Divine world and how humanity is connected to it. As Adin Steinsaltz writes in *The Thirteen Petalled Rose*, the Kabbalah's multiple worlds are all intricately interconnected, and as in Hindu *karma*, deeds have reverberations throughout creation. Many of its concepts touch upon concerns of modern mankind, e.g., *Tsim-tsum*: the absence of God and the presence of the void; the Breaking of the Vessels: the chaos of the world, recalling Derrida's deconstructionist theories; the transformative power of light and *Tikkun*: the moral obligation to restore the equilibrium of the world, with echoes of sustainability and green architecture.

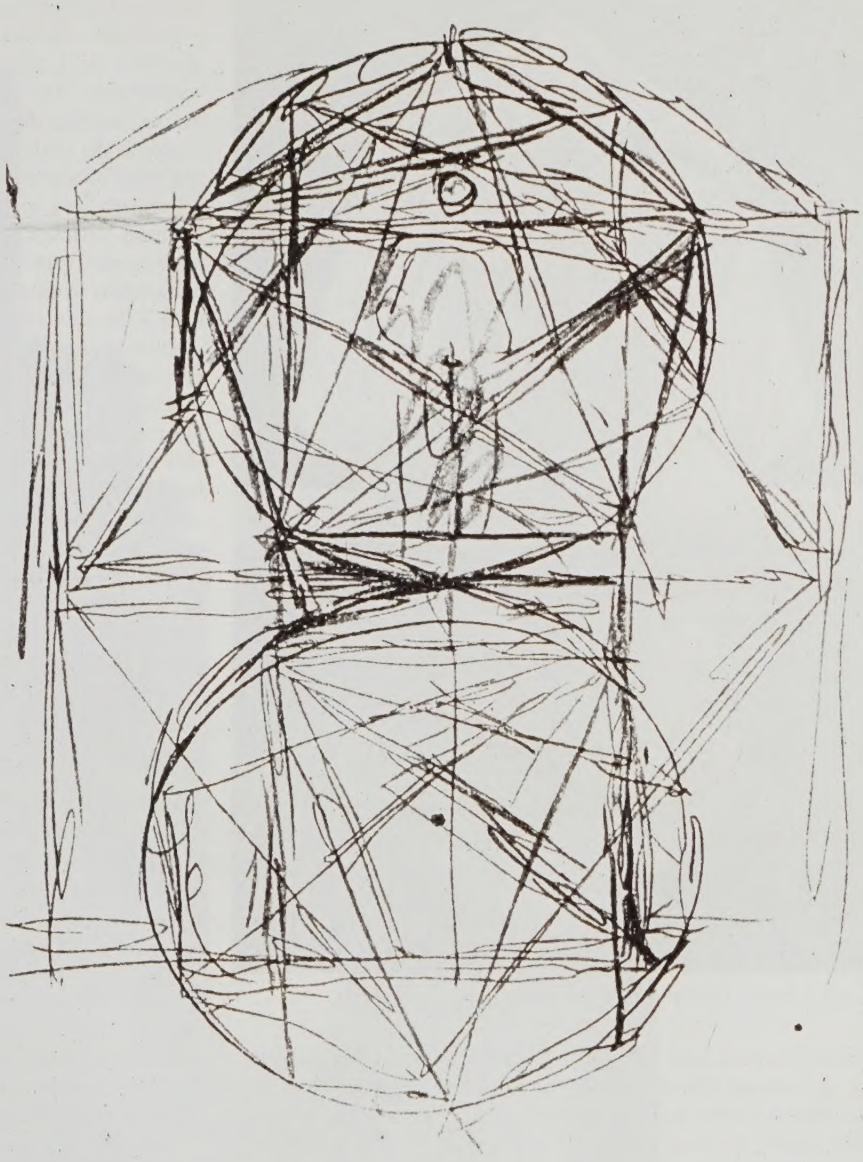
Traditionally, the study of Kabbalah was limited to married men over the age of 40. Outside the closed world of Orthodox Jewish culture that certainly has changed, with a world hungry for spiritual guidance in a previously little-known discipline. Celebrities such as Madonna and Britney Spears have popularized a mode of Kabbalah that is noticeably short on scholarship, but that is not the subject of this article.

Even noted architects such as Frank Gehry and Steven Holl are willing to discuss the influence of Kabbalah on their work. Gehry claims that he "tried studying the *Zohar*, but it was too difficult," though earlier in his youth he studied the Talmud. He suggested that I talk to his

Alexander Gorlin is principal of Alexander Gorlin Architects in New York. Architect, urban planner, and author, he also specializes in synagogue design.



Representation of the Sefirot.



Le Corbusier's sketch of the chapel at Ronchamp.

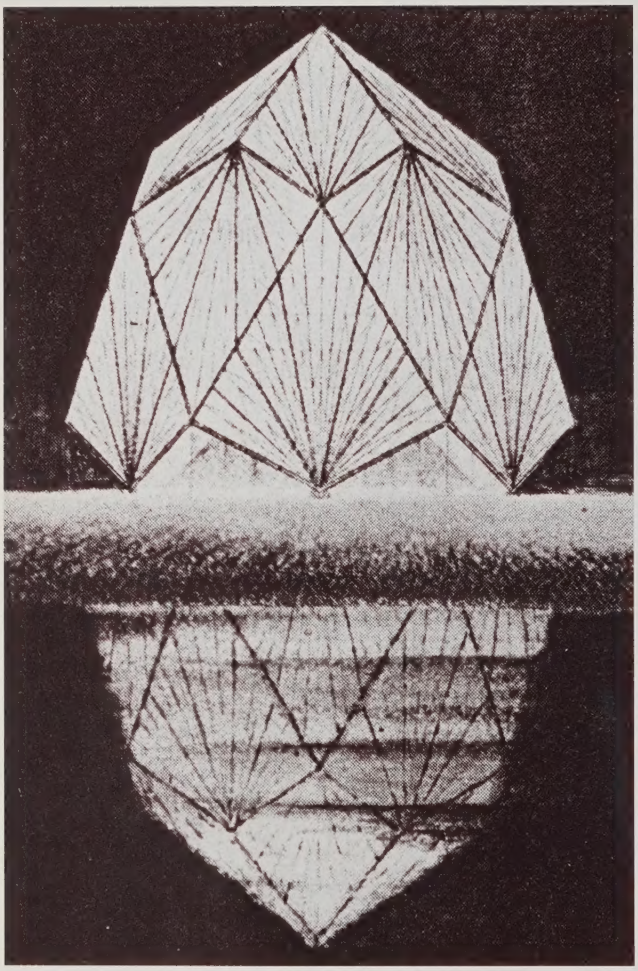
friend Margot Pritzker (of the Pritzker Prize family), who has funded a new translation of the *Zohar* (a series of books written in Aramaic that constitutes a mystical commentary on the Torah). I explained to Steven Holl the difficulty of distinguishing between the intentional use of Kabbalah and the use of these concepts when projects do not have a Jewish program, such as in his Chapel of St. Ignatius in Seattle, clearly a "vessel of light," a Kabbalistic concept. Holl admitted that he studied the works of the Kabbalah scholar Gershom Scholem in preparation for the design. Daniel Libeskind is very specific in regard to Kabbalistic references in his new Jewish Museum of San Francisco. Certainly then, both implicitly and explicitly, Kabbalah has a place in the making of architecture that is now more public than ever before, paralleling the rise of Jewish identity in the other arts. From Louis Kahn to Stanley Tigerman, who has written extensively on the topic, what was once left unsaid is now open to debate.

My interest in Kabbalah arose as a result of the charge to design a synagogue in Kings Point, New York. One of my sources of inspiration was the history of synagogues. In the 19th century the synagogue adopted an inappropriate historicist style such as Byzantine, often assigned by government authorities. As Jews were often expelled from one place to another, it was difficult for them to establish an authentic style of their own. This lack of a historic tradition of Jewish architecture, apart from Polish wooden synagogues, encouraged me to seek out texts of the Old Testament. Noah's Ark, the Tabernacle in the desert, the Temple of Solomon, and the prophet Ezekiel's Vision of the Temple are all described in great detail, including dimensions and materials. These are, however, literal descriptions, as opposed to the more abstract concepts from the Kabbalah, which are more open to interpretation in a modern sensibility.

Kabbalah and Western Art and Architecture

Embedded in the Jewish mystical tradition of Kabbalah is a strong connection with the primal concepts of architecture; space, light, and geometry. Many of its texts were translated and presented to the English-speaking world early in the 20th century through the scholar Gershom Scholem, and were thus available to a wider audience only recently. However, in the late Renaissance, an interest in Kabbalah among Christian philosophers helped circulate images and ideas that eventually found their way into intellectual circles late in the 19th century. These included the Theosophical Society, of which Piet Mondrian was a member, William Yeats and his interest in the Order of the Golden Dawn, and the Russian mystic Georgi Gurdjieff and his pupil, Olgivanna Wright.

It is exactly this lineage that explains why the architectural implications of Kabbalah have long been suppressed. Modern architecture triumphed finally through the rationalist



'Crystal on the Sphere' by Wassili Luckhardt.

philosophy of the New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*), functionalism, and the reign of Philip Johnson's International Style at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Le Corbusier's "machine for living" ruled the roost, leaving no room for the spiritual, the mythic, or the irrational. The automobile, boat, and airplane from his *Towards a New Architecture* were elevated to transcendent level. While in the world of art Cubism and Surrealism thrived by reconnecting to the primitive past of mankind, canonical modern architecture's relentless emphasis on functional and structural aspects eventually limited its relevance to all but commercial office buildings by the late 1950s and 1960s.

Le Corbusier, whose own work gradually changed to reflect his growing disillusionment with the machine, subsequently incorporated multiple mystical themes. He referred specifically to the Kabbalah in his book of 1947, *When the Cathedrals Were White*. In discussing the Middle Ages, he wrote: "human beings observed the hermetic rules of Pythagoras – searching for the law of harmony. The law of numbers was transmitted from mouth to mouth among initiates, after the exchange of secret signs. The Tour Saint-Jacques in Paris is a gigantic rebus worked out on the basis of the Cabala." Le Corbusier would have known about the mystical *Sefirot* diagram from his profound interest in alchemy, which absorbed Kabbalistic themes towards the end of the 16th century. Perhaps this explains the presence of a sketch that approximates the *Sefirot* at the end of his own book on the Chapel at Ronchamp, itself a "vessel of light" par excellence.

Louis Kahn also resisted the rationalist trend; he spoke enigmatically of Silence and Light, of a Treasury of Shadows, asked a brick "what it wanted to be," and paid homage to the multilayered nature of architecture. Just as architecture embodies a hierarchy of needs from basic shelter to the spiritual, so Kabbalah posits a universal hierarchy from *Malkhut* (foundation) to *Keter* (crown).

Presently, as currents of thought percolate through culture, ranging from New Age thinking to an emergent respect for the earth and environment, there is a renewed interest in the mystical as opposed to mainstream religion. The architectural community is not immune to these influences but reflects these ideas on many levels.

Although a number of artists since the early 1950s have made reference to the Kabbalah, rationalist critics were often reluctant or even hostile to the implied religious source. Even when the painter Barnett Neuman used explicit Kabbalistic themes, the critic Harold Rosenberg took pains to dissociate him from it. Little has changed when, 30 years later in 1996, Arnie Graafland writes "neither Libeskind nor Newman can be related to Kabbalic or Talmudic mysticism," then goes on to discuss these topics at length! Dore Ashton has openly cited the *Zohar* as a source for Rothko's late paintings of light. The German artist Anselm Kiefer has been most open in his use of Kabbalistic themes as titles and images within his works, including the *Merkabah* ("Divine Throne Chariot"), the bitterly ironic title of a series of seven ruined towers he constructed in Milan. *Sefer Hechalot*, the ascent through the seven heavenly palaces to God, is the title of a series of his paintings, and the diagram of the *Sefirot* appears numerous times in other works.

Concepts of Kabbalah

Three of the Kabbalah's most important texts are: the *Sefir Yestirah*, Book of Creation (3rd century), the *Sefer Bahir*, Book of Brightness (10th century), and most important, the *Zohar*, Book of Radiance, attributed to Moses de Leon in 1280. Equally important for our purposes is the teaching of Isaac Luria in 1550. There is no single Kabbalistic text as there is for the Old Testament, and few of those extant have been completely translated into English. Our interpretations are therefore received as well, the result of the scholarship of Gershom Scholem, Moshe Idel, and others. This accounts for the fragmentary and ambiguous world of Kabbalah; even Harold Bloom, in his famous *Kabbalah and Criticism*, based his work on these scholars' thinking.

First, the Lurianic conception of creation deals with the time before the first lines of Genesis, and posits the answer to the question: If God is everywhere how can there be room for creation? Before creation was *Ein-sof*, the infinite void. Astoundingly, rather than an active gesture of creation, there is a self-limitation, a contraction of God within himself called the *Tsim-tsum*. This withdrawal creates a vacuum within the infinite space of *Ein-sof*, from which a single beam of light splits open the blackness of the void; it then bounces back and forth across *Ein-sof* until it finally manifests itself as the *Sefirot*, the ten emanations of God. As Moses Cordovero wrote: "The Infinite, the King of Kings, who rules all: for his essence penetrates and descends via the *Sefirot* and between the *Sefirot*..."

The *Sefirot* of light is an immensely important concept that is portrayed as the structure of the Divine in a geometric treelike diagram of force and light. This network of forces is balanced left and right between, for example, *Hesed* (mercy) and *Din* (judgment) and up and down, *Keter* (crown) and *Malkhut* (foundation). There is an anthropomorphic dimension to the *Sefirot* that recalls Kundalini yoga, where just as in the *Sefirot*, the *chakra* points correspond to different parts of the human body.

text continues on page 10



Barnett Newman's 1969 sculpture, 'Tsim-tsum.'



North Shore Hebrew Academy, designed by the author.

These initial lights from the time of creation that emerge from the void of *Ein-sof* then flow into a series of vessels or bowls of light that shatter because the light that they receive is too intense. This catastrophic event is *Shevurat Hakelim*, the Breaking of the Vessels, symbolizing the breaking of the order of the universe. Miraculously, the shards of the vessels retain remnants of the original sparks of light, the hope for the future of the world. *Tikkun* is the idea of the obligation to repair the world, thus helping restore the original order of the universe, preferably through good deeds and study of the Torah.

What is remarkable is how the Lurianic creation concepts and the *Sefirot* lend themselves to architectural interpretation, both implicitly and explicitly. The concept of the void, at the heart of the *Tsim-tsum*, is about the nature of space, recalling Frank Lloyd Wright's quote of Lao Tze that the reality is the space within the vessel, not the exterior form. As we shall see, the Kabbalistic use of light is pregnant with architectural possibilities. The geometric diagram of the *Sefirot* is often portrayed as a tree, with *Malkhut* (foundation) at its roots and *Keter* (crown) at the summit. This cosmic tree is shown in a geometrical diagram of interconnected lines that assume a shape of flattened cubes superimposed upon each other, expanding into space. The network of cubes is also drawn as infinitely expandable, into the many Divine worlds; it curiously resembles hypercubes and other modern cosmological diagrams.

Kabbalah and the Expressionist Movement

Although a number of contemporary architects have noted Kabbalah as an inspiration for their work, less known is the potential relationship of Expressionist architecture to Kabbalah early in the 20th century. The circle of architects known as the Glass Chain that included Bruno Taut was inspired by the poet Paul Scheerbart, who infused the material of glass with the spiritual and mystical attributes that would elevate and purify society. He wrote, "Light seeks to penetrate the whole cosmos / And is alive in crystal." The mystical ideas related to the crystal metaphor have been shown by Rosemarie Bletter to derive originally from the apocryphal tales of King Solomon and his throne of glass, and from the crystal throne chariot of Ezekiel's vision, the direct source of *Merkabah* mysticism and the precursor to the Kabbalah. The historian Gershom Scholem lived in Berlin at the time of the group's formation; he was not only an admirer of Scheerbart, but alone collected all Scheerbart's writing and took it to Israel in 1923. Scholem was also a close friend of Walter Benjamin and introduced Benjamin to Scheerbart's work in 1917. Hans Polzeig, another Expressionist, did the sets for the silent film, *The Golem*, based on the Kabbalistic idea of a clay sculpture of a man brought to life by the mystical name of God.

The other theme of the Glass Chain group was the *Stadtekrone*, the City Crown: that a city should focus on an important and inspiring structure of height and bold design. This was the idea of the architect Bruno Taut, who dedicated his Glass Pavilion to Scheerbart and included a drawing of the Temple of Solomon in his book. The crown of light is, of course, *Keter*, the highest point of the *Sefirot*. It is a tantalizing question whether Scholem and Scheerbart discussed this congruence of meaning, especially as Scheerbart's ideas about glass had strong religious overtones. Taut included in his magazine *Fruchtlicht* writings by the Christian mystic Meister Eckhart who lived at the time of the writing of the *Zohar* and talked about the sparks of light in the soul. As for the architectural images that were produced by members of the group, Frank Gehry has cited the swirling forms of Finsterlin as the precedent for his museum at Bilbao, a *Stadtekrone* if ever there was one, and a veiled *Keter* as well. The plan of Bilbao in fact resembles a rose, the flower mentioned in the very first lines of the *Zohar*: "For there is a rose, and then there is a rose!"

Frank Lloyd Wright's relationship to mysticism is well documented through his wife, Olgivanna (a devotee of Georgi Gurdjieff) whom he married in 1925. In 1926, Wright designed the Steel Cathedral for William Guthrie in New York City. A 2,100-foot-high space for the worship of the "universal religion," Wright's description is straight out of Scheerbart: "irridescent by day, luminous by night, imperishable! Buildings, shimmering fabrics, woven of rich glass, glass all clear or part opaque and part clear, patterned in color." This Wright project takes on great meaning as the direct precedent for his only synagogue design, Beth Shalom near Philadelphia. It is a modified hexagonal Star of David in plan and is triangular in section; the client, Rabbi Mortimer Cohen, called it a "Mount Sinai of glass," the embodiment of *Keter*, the Crown.

The *Tsim-Tsum* and the Ray of Light

Barnett Neuman, the Abstract Expressionist artist of the early 1950s, made direct reference to the Kabbalah in painting, sculpture, and a synagogue project of 1963. Two side walls are broken by a folded wall of glass that he calls the *Tsim-tsum*, presented in the Jewish Museum synagogue exhibition curated by Richard Meier, who has yet to design a synagogue. Within this folded wall, light is refracted and bounces back and forth, an analogy of the *Tsim-tsum*, where light emerged from the void of darkness. Inside, in an ironic secularization, the *bimah* or reader's platform is a pitching mound, and the seats are called dugouts. It is not completely unreasonable to interpret the act of being called up to the *bimah* (to face God) as similar to a baseball batter's face-off with his pitcher.

Neuman's *Tsim-tsum* sculpture of 1969 isolates a folded wall into a free-standing sculpture of two zig-zagging folded sheets of steel that frame the empty space between. One half of the sculpture echoes the plan of Daniel Libeskind's much later Jewish Museum of Berlin. The void in the *Tsim-tsum* sculpture strongly recalls the central space framing the blue sky and the Pacific Ocean of Louis Kahn's Salk Center in La Jolla. This central court is also split by a narrow channel of water emerging from a cube of travertine, like the rock struck by Moses from which issues water (Exodus, 17:6). The reflection of the setting sun in the channel creates a vertical strip of light, the luminous line rips through the void of the night to recreate the myth of the first ray of light, recalling Neuman's *Onement* painting.

Kahn made specific reference to the Kabbalah in the plan of the Mikveh Israel synagogue, first pointed out by Jeffrey Kieffer, where the ten nodal points of the *Sefirot* became circular towers of light reflecting light back into the space of the sanctuary. Kahn often referred elliptically to ancient Jewish sources: to the nine-square plan interpretation of Ezekiel's Vision of the Temple in the Hurva Synagogue in Jerusalem (1968–1972), and in his glass-cubed Holocaust Memorial for New York (1964–1972). He referenced Polish wooden synagogues in his Temple Beth-el in Chappaqua, New York.

Both Daniel Libeskind and Peter Eisenman use the concept of "void space" in their architecture where Jewish themes are present, especially in their Holocaust memorials. In Libeskind's Jewish Museum of Berlin, the void tower symbolizes the Holocaust, and the implied withdrawal of God, identifying the *Tsim-tsum* with the temporary triumph of evil. In his Berlin Holocaust Memorial Eisenman creates a field of sliced forms where the spaces between the cubic blocks are the paths for experiencing the monument. Again, the emptiness of the "negative space" is the field for the crimes of the Nazi era, using *Tsim-tsum* as metaphor. In his War Museum in Liverpool, Libeskind literally uses the concept of a shattered sphere, its shards in disarray, as the form of the museum and a literal interpretation of the broken vessels, this Kabbalistic reference pointed out by Charles Jencks.

Returning to my own work at the North Shore Hebrew Academy, the synagogue design made a virtue of the necessity of burying most of the building's form by animating the design with the concept of the "Breaking of the Vessels." The interior space appears to be bursting with light, and is focused on a cube of light over the ark, with clerestories emanating from this central point. The cube is fractured by two triangles that evoke not only the Star of David, but also the diagram of the *Sefirot*, which also informs the pattern on the curtain in front of the ark.

The field remains wide open, with the excitement of the unearthing of a new mine of inspiration and new worlds to explore in space, form, and light.

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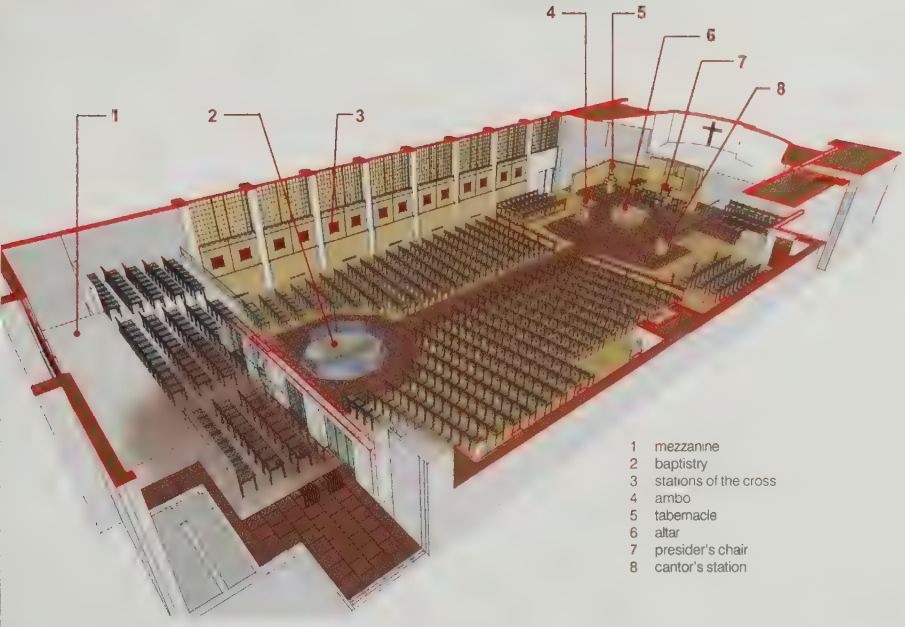
Detail of the full-emersion octagonal font with glass mosaics.



From Gym to Gem

The Interior Renovation of St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church

By William H. Geier, AIA



Overview of the newly renovated sanctuary, which is a former gym.



The chancel was enlarged and pulled toward the congregation.

Photo: Hochlander Davis Photography

When St. Philip's Catholic Church in Arlington, Virginia, was dedicated in 1963, its limited monetary resources went towards building a much-needed school. Though the school had first priority, the parish planned to continue fundraising and eventually construct a place for worship. From the beginning, mass was held in a multipurpose space that also served as a grade-school gymnasium. But when the school closed many years later, the pastor and the parishioners sought a design to transform the multipurpose space into a more appropriate house for worship. In 2004, the parish, through the Diocese of Arlington, hired us to plan the major interior renovations.

Recognizing the limitations and the general architectural character of a space built as a multipurpose room, the parish established several program goals as a guide for our work. The new design—in addition to creating an atmosphere more conducive to worship—was to enhance the music liturgy; provide a sense of connection and procession into the nave; and create a stronger visual focus on the altar and the sanctuary from all seating areas. Moreover, the design was to work around and incorporate existing structural elements and mechanical system components.

Expectations for the renovation were high, as it was the first significant construction project undertaken by the parish since its creation. Another challenge in working with the existing building envelope was the tight budget allocated for the building's renovation. The design solution had to be a dramatic transformation, achieved through basic materials and accented by special elements.

There were several challenging design issues to address during the early stages of the project. The long narrow room proportions and the relatively low ceiling had been adequate for a gymnasium, but were inappropriate for a worship space. Our first task was to deal with the existing altar, which was far removed from the front rows of seating. Because of poor room acoustics and obscured sight lines from many angles, parishioners often felt detached from the worship activity in the sanctuary. As a result, one significant design decision was to increase the size of the sanctuary's chancel platform and pull it forward to better engage

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View from lectern into the nave.
Photo: Hochlander Davis Photography

the seating areas. Behind it, a new sculptural backdrop was created that—through its geometry—helps direct views towards the altar. The depth of the backdrop also neatly accommodates necessary storage, mechanical equipment, a ramp (to allow access to the elevated platform) and speakers for the new organ. When a planned rear window had to be deleted due to budget restraints, the backdrop was further sculpted to provide a lighted niche that highlights the crucifix.

New treatment of the long side walls emphasizes the asymmetrical design of the altar area backdrop. To save costs, the large translucent windows on the east side wall were left in place and were balanced with a new wall form on the opposite side, designed to accommodate existing statues. The shapes of the sculpturally treated side walls were, along with other design elements, developed in conjunction with an acoustical engineer to improve sound within the space for both music and the spoken word.

The ceiling has a symmetrical pattern to complement the asymmetrical treatment of the back and side walls. The pattern is generated from the rhythm of existing structural elements and conceals lighting, mechanical, and sound-system components. In contrast to the previously dark, heavy ceiling, the new sculpted and illuminated ceiling plane deemphasizes the existing glu-lam structure and visually raises the low, flat ceiling. A secondary pattern within the ceiling cuts across the lines of existing structural framing and helps focus attention on the axial relationship of the liturgical elements, by guiding views towards the chancel.

Another important design goal was to give the space a central focus. To emphasize the importance of the central axis, a floor pattern of contrasting tile colors was chosen. Darker tile begins in the narthex and extends along the processional route into the nave; it widens first around the octagonal baptistery and again at the chancel. Lighter tile is canted towards the center of the seating areas to emphasize the view towards the altar; the angled tile pattern assists staff in correctly spacing the rows of existing loose chairs that were reused to reduce costs. Polished tile was chosen to give reflections in open areas on the floor and to provide visual depth which, along with the illuminated ceiling plane, adds a sense of volume to the space.

Color was integral in creating the character of the space as a whole. The darker tile of the bema sets off the lighter Jerusalem stone of the new liturgical elements; these elements share similar detailing and are crafted from the same stone and wood. Prominent and substantial, they are also consistent with the muted color palette applied to the overall space.

The original central entry doors were replaced by a glass-enclosed ambry, allowing sight lines from the narthex to the nave. Paths from the new flanking side doors converge inside the nave around the sunken font in a widened aisle. Liturgically, the octagonal baptistery at the entrance to the nave has the greatest transformative impact on the worship space; on axis with the altar and made with the same materials used in the sanctuary, it reinforces the significance of the font as a symbol of cleansing and new life. Brightly colored Byzantine-style glass mosaics—inset at the corners of the font—reference the four Evangelists and stand out against the surrounding neutral colors.

Once an inadequate space for worship, the gymnasium at St. Philip's has been transformed into a spiritual space, supportive of the life and spirit of the parish it serves.

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Wilson Chapel

A New Meetinghouse for a School 'Set on a Hill'

By Mark S. Burrows



At the beginning of the 20th century, one of the luminaries in the world of arts and letters, Henry Brooks Adams, privately published a meditative study of two great medieval churches, Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres. Adams considered it suitable for only a select readership, dismissing the notion of a wider publication as "a mad venture of faith." The volume eventually appeared in a commercial version published by the American Institute of Architects in 1913, with an adulatory preface by Boston architect Ralph Adams Cram. In the years following, it became one of the enduring classics in the literature devoted to medieval theology, art, and architecture, since Adams viewed these churches as occasions for a wide-ranging meditation on the culture that both shaped and was shaped by the Church. Although much of Adams's writing is inspired by an idealistic vision of this society, it remains a remarkable meditation on how sacred space carries meaning and how meaning "constructs" such space, in this case by highlighting two of the preeminent structures that Adams considered to embody what he presumed to be the great synthesis of medieval culture. Adams – and Cram with him – privileged the revival of the Gothic style against what he considered to be the fragmentation and uncertainties of "modernity." The architects of these magnificent edifices, he argued, "took the Church and the universe for truths, and tried to express them in a structure which should be final."

Such confidence, which Adams already recognized as a longing for a lost synthesis, seems a distant cry from our context today in which we have come to tolerate or even celebrate, without recourse to some overarching unity, the very "complexity, multiplicity, variety, and even contradiction" that Adams so decried. And yet his longing for what he thought of as an "organic unity," which he presumed had been lost by the later Middle Ages, was more than a naïve nostalgia: it became for him a yearning for complexity and depth against what he berated as Wordsworth's limiting hope to imagine life as "a season of calm weather." Strangely, Adams did not develop eyes to appreciate the unifying beauty marked by the simple and austere aesthetic that characterized the architecture of New England Puritanism. At their best and purest such buildings embodied, if in an altogether different form than the Gothic form he so favored, a vibrant expression of an aesthetic he had come to value: one that embodied and enhanced the human sense of the transcendent. How it accomplished this, according to Adams, had everything to do with a proper attention to architectural coherence, and particularly to its accomplishment by attention to luminosity and verticality. Such features were requisite in building a church in which prayer locates the human within the vast structure of the universe.

Such considerations might well come into play when designing any church for the 21st century. But what kind of building should one envision when such a space is to be fashioned for a Protestant theological school, and more specifically for one whose heritage is so central for New England congregationalism? And how might one capture in the design of such a building a sense of this school's identity and mission in a way that conveys both its long sense of tradition as the oldest Protestant graduate school of theology in the U.S., on the one hand, and its commitment to theological innovation, intellectual adaptability, and pedagogical experimentation throughout its history, on the other? This was the challenge faced by Brett Donham of Donham & Sweeney Architects in Boston, when he received the commission to design a new chapel for Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Centre, Massachusetts. In a series of exploratory conversations he facilitated with the school's diverse constituents – faculty and trustees, students and alumni/ae – Donham posited that the chapel should aim not at "finality," in Adams's sense, but for a blending of tradition and innovation, permanence and permeability, endurance and adaptability. It should convey a sense of dwelling on this hilltop campus, while at the same time opening toward the distances – Boston to the east, and Blue Hill in Milton to the southeast, the visible horizon from the east side of the new chapel – and embodying in its design the fruitful tensions of stability and mission, attentiveness and interruption, which characterize a vital theological community.

Wilson Chapel, the signature of a school celebrating its bicentennial year in 2007-08, was to be the first building erected since a significant phase of construction in the late 1950s. At that time, the outline of a quadrangle had been constructed, but this seemed to be an addendum to the original campus footprint comprising Colby Chapel and Colby Hall on the west end of campus, a residential hall, and the old library. Flanking a narrow, tree-lined "green" on the then new campus were dor-



Wilson Chapel as it faces the Andover Newton Theological School quadrangle.

Photo: Richard Mandelkorn

Dr. Mark S. Burrows is Professor of the History of Christianity and Faculty Director of the Program in Worship, Theology, and Arts at Andover Newton.

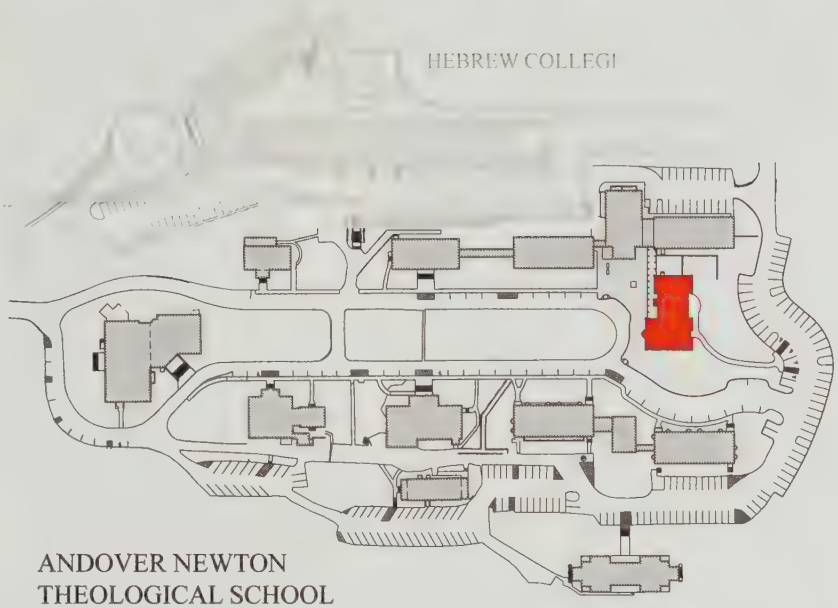
mitories across from an office building, an auditorium, and a classroom building. At the end of this quadrangle, facing the library, was an open space that had long been envisioned as the site of a new chapel.

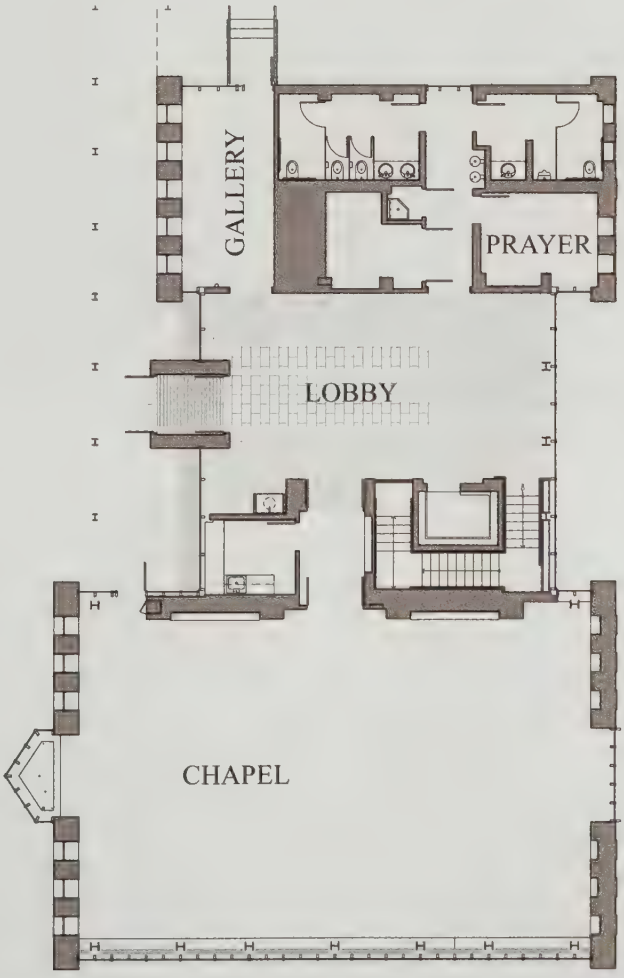
Located at the open end of the campus quadrangle, Wilson Chapel now stands as the focal point of the campus, visually, practically, and symbolically. The chapel connects to a classroom building by means of a covered walkway in a manner reminiscent of a monastic cloister, which relates the various functions of a monastery to the life of worship: study and learning, living accommodations, and administration. But with this the analogy gives way to quite different emphases, since this seminary community is one marked by *mobility* rather than *stability*, and the life of prayer that happens in this space has a kind of regularity different from that of the "liturgy of the hours" observed by monks. Accommodating the diverse needs of such a community had much to do with Donham's final design.

A seminary chapel is a peculiar hybrid of "church" to design, of course, since it does not house a settled congregation. It is the locus for the somewhat fluid gathering of the community of faculty and students, primarily but by no means exclusively, for worship. In this the chapel honors the meetinghouse tradition, established as a public space serving the needs of the religious community as well as offering space for other forms of public gatherings: both theological and cultural traditions and uses shape such a building in form and function. This strong tradition of Reformed teaching had long held that *every* place could become "holy," *each* space a sanctuary for the gathering community of worship, and *any* particular church a place available for other purposes – thus serving as the meetinghouse for all the community's public needs.

Such a deliberate openness of form allows for a flexible use of space, refusing to distinguish the sacred from the secular. Furthermore, because of the school's developing collaboration with Hebrew College, which recently moved its campus to the eastern slope of the Andover Newton hill, the space was designed with the expectation that it will be used by the Jewish community for various public occasions. In this case, the commitment to living out the school's mission within a religiously pluralistic setting has meant that the adaptability of this chapel expresses more than an ethic of shared space: it expresses the deeper value of the school's commitment to hospitality, to welcoming the "other" as a partner in dialogue and shared common life.

Yet Wilson Chapel is anything but a purely





Ground level plan.



Photo: Richard Mandelkorn

Interior of the chapel and its squares of light.

functional space. Its interior articulates an aesthetic that speaks not so much of duty as it does of delight. The spacious openings of glass, the expanse of polished Jerusalem stone, and a roominess of height that lifts the eyes: all of these dimensions of the chapel initiate a maximal play between height and depth, light and shadow, and playful is a vital dimension of what one feels upon entering the space. It does in this particular sense honor Adams's notion that "theology turns into art at the last, and ends in aspiration." In its luminous spaciousness the sanctuary evokes a sense of expansiveness and even grandeur, if on a scale appropriate to a meetinghouse. The architect accomplished a careful blending of function and form in a way that looks both back toward older New England traditions and forward in light of the school's emerging passions as a school committed to "building the beloved community" in this time and place. To vary the biblical saying: the design draws from the architect's treasury "what is new and what is old" (Matthew, 13:52), the substance of the chapel carrying the familiar lines of a colonial meetinghouse, with the pitch of the roof congruent with that of such structures, but conveying this form in altogether new dimensions.

Throughout the space, one has the sense that the building honors tradition precisely by varying what is familiar from the past through distinct, contemporary innovations. As one example, in the place of a steeple, a later addition to the original structure of the colonial meetinghouse and a feature Adams affirmed as that which "justifies the church," the building is graced by a glass tower that establishes the chapel's sense of vertical lift, both from the exterior and within. As seen from the west, this shaft of glass rises in congruity with the old maples that stand in rows along the quadrangle, its glass peak marking an opening into the skies above the chapel's roofline.

To continue this blending of innovation and tradition, the chapel is not clad in the white clapboard punctuated by tall rectangular windows, as one would expect of a New England meetinghouse, but rather offers a front façade of stone interrupted by a regular pattern of square windows of translucent glass. The effect of these windows seems to "contain" the space from within, while interrupting the otherwise solid sense of the polished limestone with its rich color and texture. These "boxes" create vessels for a play of light and shadow, of surface and depth; surrounding as they do the vertical expanse of glass, with its alluring views into the distances, they also invoke what the phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard has called an "intimate immensity," a feature of the external world which mirrors itself in our own interiority. This effect is heightened by the play of window and façade together with the strong visual "lift" created by the steel structural rods that cross the space above the upper line of the walls.

From within the sanctuary, what is most striking amid the varied moods of a New England day is the play of sun and shadow as it streams through the eastern window in the morning and the southern wall of glass during the afternoon. The cruciform patterns cast by the linearity of the window frames project shadows of crosses throughout the space – on the eastern wall, and across the floor. Since the space has no fixed front, it can be oriented differently for varied forms of worship or other functions that might occur here, and in keeping with the heritage of a Puritan meetinghouse there is no fixed cross on any wall. Far from diminishing its significance in a space such as this, this absence draws the eyes toward the wider resonance of this essential form in its myriad expressions of presence throughout the space. Here, symbolic echoes carry the day over a more literal expression.

Within the interior of the chapel, the powerful visual experience one has is the discovery of the cross *everywhere*, not only in the shadows cast throughout the space as light filters through the window frames but also as one looks outward through the windows themselves. The world as seen from the viewer's vantage point, both within and from outside, seems to be everywhere symbolically "crossed," as it were.

This is also evident in the cruciform design of the beams made of structural steel that support the southern wall of clear windows. Indeed,

ARCHITECT'S COMMENTARY on WILSON CHAPEL



By Brett Donham

The problem, and the pleasure, for a modern architect designing a new space for worship is that the old forms and styles cannot be relied upon in the complex contemporary world in which we live and worship. At the conceptual phase of design, the designer must search more deeply for meaning in architectural form-giving if she is to avoid the trite and the facile.

The question of appropriate form for Wilson Chapel was further complicated by its location in a theological seminary. It is not a parish or community church; it serves a variety of faiths, each of which has its own architectural history, traditions, markers, and expectations. Wilson Chapel also serves as a classroom, a place of praxis for liturgy, a lecture hall, and a performance space for concerts, dance, and theatre. Another distinguishing characteristic of the seminary is its focus on the future, on the unfolding of the Holy Spirit in the life of its students and the institution itself. A seminary must be a prophetic institution, and its architecture should reflect this. At the very least its new architecture should reflect the time in which it is built, not the past.

Wilson Chapel needed to respond to three principal influences, context, program, and symbolic meaning. The center of the campus is a tree-lined quadrangle. The symbolism of the two ends of this central unifying space being occupied by the intellectual and spiritual concentrations of seminary life was not lost on anyone. Given the strong geometry of the quadrangle, consensus quickly formed that the new chapel should be a strong focal point, centered on the long axis of the quadrangle.

The 190-seat chapel space itself represents only about 20 percent of the total floor area. A small art gallery, a narthex, a chaplain's office, a five-person meditation room, a 30-person prayer room, lounge space, and space for video taping, editing, and webcasting were also needed. The planning solution places the chapel on the centerline of the quadrangle, with a 50-foot-tall glass tower or "steeple," illuminated at night as a beacon. The glass tower descends into a pool of water that symbolizes baptism and spiritual birth. Entrance is via an arcade leading into a large narthex and then into the middle of the chapel. The gallery and the chaplain's office share this floor, while the other spaces are on a lower level that opens out on grade to the rear.

The primary mission of a seminary is formation, i.e., the transformation of people into spiritual beings who are able to explicate the Gospel, administer the Sacraments, and minister to others. Formation happens in community; it cannot happen in isolation. Much of this process of formation at Andover Newton will take place in Wilson Chapel. A large room clearly of the 21st century but with historical roots, the chapel looks outward though the large glass wall to the south as well as inward, reflecting the duality of today's ministry. Its ceiling follows the underside of the pitched roof but utilizes a "decorated" exposed structural system to tie it together. Acknowledging and celebrating the structural forces at work, it is a sign of integrity in a setting where integrity is a necessary part of formation.

Another key ingredient in formation is fellowship, the opportunity to discuss, question, laugh, experiment, and be vulnerable – all in an open and supportive environment. The large narthex, through which everyone who uses the building must pass, provides the setting for that informal serendipitous complement to structured education. It was made open and spacious, and provided with an expansive view to the Blue Hills to encourage that kind of use, both before and after events in the chapel.

Wilson Chapel, like the New Testament, grew out of old roots and traditions, but promises something new and exciting for the future.

Brett Donham, a principal at Donham & Sweeney – Architects, Boston, serves on a number of committees at the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, and is the Chair of the Trustees of the Episcopal Divinity School.

one senses a complex paradox in how the visual lines within this chapel, honoring the visual neutrality of the Puritan heritage and in keeping with the iconoclasm of the Reformed tradition with its thorough-going rejection of images to convey the nature of the sacred, articulate the cross throughout the space. Otherwise, the sense of the chapel as an empty vessel bows to the acoustic needs and sensibilities of the sanctuary, one designed to carry the resonance of voice needed for both speech and song. This accentuates the importance of vocality alongside the luminous *visuality* of the space.

The entrance level of the building from the quadrangle, dominated by the meetinghouse at the southern end, includes a smaller structure to the north that echoes the chapel in its essential shape and dimensions. This element houses an intimate art gallery opening into the central foyer, providing a space for small exhibits which, by its location, establishes a kind of visual conversation with the sanctuary itself. The gallery offers an intriguing counterpoint to the complete absence of any iconographic details in the sanctuary itself.

What, then, might be said of this chapel in aesthetic terms? If we probe the confluence of Reformed theological traditions shaping the two institutional streams that make up this school – the Baptist roots of Newton Theological Institution (founded 1825) and the Congregationalist roots of Andover Theological Seminary (founded 1807), as these once distinct schools were originally known – we might distinguish three fundamental themes that find artistic and architectural expression in this chapel.

The first is the way in which the empty space itself houses the essential art of this chapel. This place becomes a church not through external ornamentation but through the witness of speech and song, proclamation and praise, which constitute the living worship that transpires in this place. The gathering community *makes* of this a church, as was always the case with the meetinghouse of Puritan heritage. The space provides a living example, therefore, of one of the early Protestant reformers' oft-cited biblical texts: "Faith comes from *what is heard*, and what is heard comes through *the word* of Christ" (Romans, 10:17). The sanctuary is thus shaped by a deliberate attention to acoustics, and in its emptiness anticipates the vocalization of worship: as a "vessel," the chapel awaits the congregating community in a way that the great medieval cathedrals do not. Of course, how the word will be "spoken" and heard will find expression here in many forms, among them dance and the dramatic arts.

Second, the chapel refuses in its neutrality to distinguish the sacred from the secular, blending in a manner responsive to the Reformed tradition the religious and the mundane. Without challenging the constitutional separation of church and state, this heritage seeks to maintain the lively manner in which religion

engages public issues. In keeping with the meetinghouse *context*, such a space deliberately avoids proposing any particular religious content, yielding rather to the dynamic context of use as the factor shaping what it means to become a community of testimony, a congregation that finds life in its witness to God's (be)coming-among-us.

Third, the space conveys in its interior form an esthetic one might describe as that of intimate immensity, shaped by the play of shadow and light, accentuated by the sense of height and breadth, and opened outward into the distances as these are conveyed from within by the vast wall of glass to the south. And yet the whole room is held together by the solidity of stone to the east and west, along with the warmth of natural wood and acoustic fabric ornamenting the north wall.

Henry Adams assumed that the ideal form of Christianity "took the Church and the universe for truths, and tried to express them in a structure which should be final." Clearly, Wilson Chapel expresses quite different intentions: dynamic change shapes the sense of this space, revealing what one might see as a coherence based on a permeable identity. If there is to be some "synthesis" that comes about in this space, it will be one that is organic and vital in embracing diversities of faith and life – within and beyond the Christian world. And, as the centering locus of the campus, its form seems more hospitable to conversation than declaration. Under the allurement of transparency and luminosity, the chapel suggests that, indeed, the mission of theological study here "turns into art at the last and ends in aspiration." Of what sort remains to be seen, though the chapel's gesture of opening to the world and turning toward the future embodies a new sense of what a meetinghouse might become as this school faces its third century of life and mission.



Photo: Richard Mandelkorn

Detail of the chapel windows and structure.

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Primal Symbols in Sacred Spaces



By Barbara Howington

Clear water spills quietly from a fountain. Flickering candles softly illuminate the darkness. Early morning sunlight pours in through a window and illuminates the room. These primal symbols—water, fire, and light—are meaningful to most religions. In moments of prayer and worship, they lift us out of the normal and into the sacred. For architect Shelly Hyndman, primal symbols can mean the difference between a church that is just a building and one that conveys a sense of sacred mystery.

"Primal symbols are timeless representations of God the creator. They've been used for thousands of years in religious ceremonies of all kinds. Water, fire, and light speak to us within our core," says Hyndman, a principal of Hyndman & Hyndman Architects in Cardiff by the Sea, California. In her more than 20 years as an architect, she has designed at least 40 churches. Rich in possibilities for spiritual expression, churches are her favorite projects. "People are giving their hard-earned money to build something because of their love of God and they really care about it."

Hyndman has found that although water, fire, and light are used universally in religious rites, primal symbols are not always designed into a church. Hyndman embraces symbols in her approach, searching for opportunities to enrich a church's sense of spirituality and mystery, inside and outside the sanctuary. She takes a holistic view of the entire church campus, designing beyond the four walls of the church and extending her design boundaries to the very edges of the property.

"Primal symbols can be used in so many ways to enhance the sense of sacred mystery. For example, abundant water is rich in symbolism. It's a life-giving symbol that can be used ceremonially inside the sanctuary and also outside within spaces for contemplation and private prayer," says Hyndman.

Water: Cleansing, Purification, and Renewal

In many religions, water symbolizes purity. Hindus believe water has spiritually cleansing powers. Muslims cleanse in purifying fountains before approaching God in prayer. In Christian baptism, water represents entry into a life with God.

When the congregation of St. Gregory the Great entrusted Hyndman to design their Catholic church in Scripps Ranch, California, they came to her with the specific goal of creating a church that expressed the life-giving connection of water, earth, and baptism. Hyndman's design used water to physically define the new church and campus.

Water traverses St. Gregory the Great's church campus, unifying sanctuary, social ministry spaces, and grounds in harmony with devotional gardens and prayer paths. In the sanctuary under a sky-lit cupola, a large, bronze, bowl-shaped font sits on a decorative tree grate open to a pool below. Water sheets over the edges of the font into the pool, where it collects and spills out into the steps that frame the lower full-immersion baptismal font. These fonts are filled with water for the Easter season and are then drained, symbolizing Christ's journey in the desert, and emphasizing the absence of water during the Lenten season.

Overview of the St. Gregory the Great campus, across which water traverses.

Photo courtesy of Hyndman & Hyndman





St. Gregory the Great's baptismal is a series of fonts.

Photo courtesy of Hyndman & Hyndman



Photo Pablo Mason

Light kisses the Blessed Sacrament Chapel in St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church.

Fire: Unity, Gathering, and Initiation

In primeval ages, fire was a symbol of respect. God manifested himself to man as fire in biblical times, and sometimes compared himself to an ardent fire. Fire is woven into religious celebrations with candles that symbolize unity, gathering in worship and initiation. The use of votive candles in private prayer can be dated back to polytheistic worship and beyond. Today, says Hyndman, candles can seem a token or an afterthought in a church setting, perhaps because of safety concerns.

Hyndman uses fire as a primal symbol to deepen the spiritual experience. Candles, placed safely in surrounds of fire-resistant materials such as precast concrete or sand, glow warmly in prayer spaces. In churches where fire is central to the Catholic Easter Vigil celebration, Hyndman folds it into the design of the church.

Hyndman found an ideal opportunity to bring fire to the forefront, when designing St. Gregory the Great. Where most churches rarely integrate Easter Vigil fire areas into the permanent site design, Hyndman instead located a fire ring outside the sanctuary, on axis with the altar and visible through a dramatic wall of windows beside the altar. The altar and fire create a liturgical connection, and the congregation can see the fire burning throughout the nighttime celebration. Candles flicker



The Easter fire ring at St. Gregory the Great draws parishioners together.

in a suspended arrangement high above the baptismal font, adding to the sense of spirituality and mystery.

Light: Power, Knowledge, and Love

Light dispels darkness. This is a powerful image in many religions, usually symbolizing the truth, power, and love of God. As a halo or an aura seen around holy beings, light represents knowledge, wisdom, and purity. Hyndman feels that designing worship spaces to emphasize light is the greatest opportunity to use primal symbols in the creation of sacred space. The intangible nature of light and its power to transform and change a space are endless, she says. How daylight moves through the sanctuary and enriches the gardens is important to the spiritual experience.

Gothic cathedrals were designed with tracery, heavier at the base and letting in more light ascending toward heaven. The San Diego Latter-day Saints Temple, a Hyndman & Hyndman collaborative project, employs a similar concept, with art glass that is opaque at the base, increasing in transparency up towards the top of its 190-foot-tall towers. The magnificent towers symbolize the three tiers of the celestial kingdom, with the remaining building between the towers stepping up with each level of spiritual significance and again introducing more light. The lowest level of the building is almost entirely subterranean.

Hyndman's designs often incorporate daylight filtered through hidden windows, conveying a sense of sacred mystery with the quality of reflected light that is felt but not seen. She designed the St. Mark Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach, California, using this technique to bounce light around from hidden windows. Large expanses of daylight are invited into the sanctuary through windows not visible from the interior. Multiple openings in walls reflect the light onto a deep, sweeping space sculpted into the walls, creating a peaceful day-lit background for the chancel. By using the mystical quality of indirect daylight, the focus remains liturgical, undistracted by window views and glare.

Summing up her church design philosophy, Hyndman says that "a church must convey a sense of spirituality and sacred mystery. It's not like going to a shopping mall or a library. It should touch us and represent our faith and beliefs. Primal symbols make that connection for us. They enhance our spiritual experience."

Barbara Howington is a writer living in San Diego, California. She has worshiped in an eclectic collection of sacred places, from a small grotto outside of Bethlehem and a soaring Florentine cathedral in Italy to a Pentecostal church in Los Angeles and a high school gymnasium in a small Northern California city.

A Dynamic Partnership: Architects and Fundraisers



By Robert I. Evans

For more than 80 years, according to *Giving USA 2007*, a report published by the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, about a third of all charitable giving in the U.S. has been donated for religious purposes, primarily directed to churches, synagogues, or mosques, and to the many and varied needs which dynamic houses of worship demand. No exact figure delineates how much of these large sums of money has been utilized for bricks and mortar, although reliable estimates are possible.

A leader in the resource development field for more than 30 years, I formed the EHL Consulting Group in 1991. Focusing on Jewish houses of worship, our firm has become one of the largest fundraising and management consulting firms in the U.S. Based on this experience, I can say that the relationships that have historically existed between the architects who design magnificent houses of worship and the specialists in fundraising – the men and women who oversee vibrant capital campaigns that attract widespread support from people of faith – have never been especially close. As construction projects increase in scope and now require millions of dollars from generous donors, a new perspective is required if these worthwhile projects are to come to fruition.

In 2006, religious organizations attracted almost $97 billion from their members and friends, representing a 4.5 percent increase over the prior year, according to *Giving USA 2007*. And each year since 1966, charitable giving to religious organizations has increased by approximately 6.8 percent. If we add up all reported giving to religion in the U.S. for the ten-year period from 1997 to 2006, we calculate nearly $387 billion! Safely, we can estimate that at least a third of these funds were used to offset hundreds of construction and renovation projects, ranging from as little as $250,000 to more than $50 million. As both architects and fundraising experts know, each of these projects clearly required knowledgeable and creative architects; and most likely all of the larger projects called for fundraising experts to provide counsel to everyone involved, from designers to clergy, professional staffs, and volunteer teams.

But how can architects and fundraising experts best support each other and facilitate projects together? We offer several practical suggestions that could change the existing paradigm whereby architects and fundraising specialists have each historically worked in a vacuum but where partnerships could truly propel strong projects forward more quickly and expeditiously.

Accept the team concept from the outset.

When architects and fundraising specialists team together creatively at the start of a project, cost savings and dynamic projects result.

The sharing of information between architects and fundraisers – especially those specializing in houses of worship – should be more widely encouraged.

Knowing what donors might support in capital projects can assist architects in their designs and approaches. For instance, a sanctuary balcony requested by the clergy of a synagogue complex in initial designs was somewhat controversial. Although congregants were somewhat silent in public meetings and other settings, they disliked this addition intensely, a situation that we, the fundraising consultants, made clear to the architects and clergy. The balcony disappeared from the designs only after we, the fundraising consultant, highlighted the conflicts and pointed out that major donors would back away from the campaign unless significant design changes were made.

In another instance, an architect obediently followed the client's instructions to completely disregard environmental issues. After the design was completed, we were hired to provide fundraising counsel, only to learn that the constituents were really looking for a LEED-certified and environmentally thoughtful building. While a great deal of time and money had been wasted, we were able to advise the organization's leadership to reevaluate their approaches and ultimately to secure the funding needed to build a house of worship that set a new direction for social action, community involvement, and religious practices.

Architects should be prepared to integrate appropriate and creative donor recognition into their house of worship projects.

As architects do not always understand donor recognition signage, it is beneficial to include appropriate donor recognition in the building design, with fundraising experts prepared to offer ways to implement creative solutions to a sensitive priority. This potentially saves a congregation tremendous time and money. Also, the inclusion of recognition opportunities at the beginning of a project provides important and creative ways to express appreciation to donors for their support, without jeopardizing the integrity of the project or the overall design. Using innovative materials such as glass, developing unusual exterior treatments, or implementing other creative ideas can assist a fundraising campaign and can make the architects especially valuable members of the team.

Architects can be critical participants in presentations to major donors.

Architects need to be comfortable with sharing details about their projects. In one instance, we worked hand-in-hand with the design team for the expansion of a beloved 100-year-old facility. The architects made numerous presentations at board meetings and town hall gatherings, and received valuable input along with congregational support. In our one-on-one presentations to potential donors, we were able to successfully exhibit beautiful conceptual drawings of the design, incorporating the old with the new, and to provide impressive renderings of the recognition walls that were incorporated in the schematics from the onset.

Fundraising experts should become more familiar with the way architects develop their timelines for projects – and vice versa.

It is helpful to the architect for the fundraising specialist to have determined the "giving capacity" of the institution so that the scope of the project is realistic. Ideally, the fundraising consultant is also aware of the timing of design and construction so that the fundraising campaign can be scheduled accordingly. It is often important to have a certain percentage of the funds pledged in order to proceed with construction and to avoid stalling the project.

Robert I. Evans is founder and managing director of The EHL Consulting Group, Inc., of Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, which since 1991 has become one of the largest fundraising and management consulting firms in the U.S. focusing on Jewish houses of worship. He is on the Board of Giving Institute (formerly the American Association of Fundraising Counsel).



Photo: Marcie Ward

Donor wall at the Riverdale Jewish Center in Riverdale, New York, designed by Presentations Gallery of Mt. Vernon, New York.

Architects and fundraising firms should establish close strategic alliances in the earliest stages of a project.

Frequently, we are called in to help devise fundraising programs for large projects after the architect has already completed initial planning. With growing frequency, we find this to be too late because those involved with the planning – lay leaders, clergy, or architects – have created plans that will not resonate with donors or congregants. Or the plans are too extravagant for what a congregation can realistically afford. The result: costly mistakes, too-lofty expectations, or designs that require unreasonable "salesmanship."

Not too long ago, our firm was called in to assess a $20–25 million remodeling and expansion project after the congregation had agreed on an architect's design. We learned very quickly that the project as designed would not win the approval of major donors and would probably irritate neighbors because the new facility was being constructed close to the property line, it violated sensibilities beyond zoning problems, and it seemed not to be in scale with the surrounding buildings. Ultimately, a new architectural firm was called in to take an entirely different approach. More than one year of work was lost, causing major donors to become impatient and extremely agitated. Based on extensive interviews with various segments of the congregations, we presented a study with recommendations reflecting donors' reactions to some of the design problems. The membership's input and the subsequent design changes made the project stronger. Had we worked more closely with the architect from the outset, we could have saved a great deal of time, money, and collective emotional energy. This experience also reinforced our philosophy that the more people involved, the greater the buy-in and ownership, resulting in a more successful design project and fundraising effort.

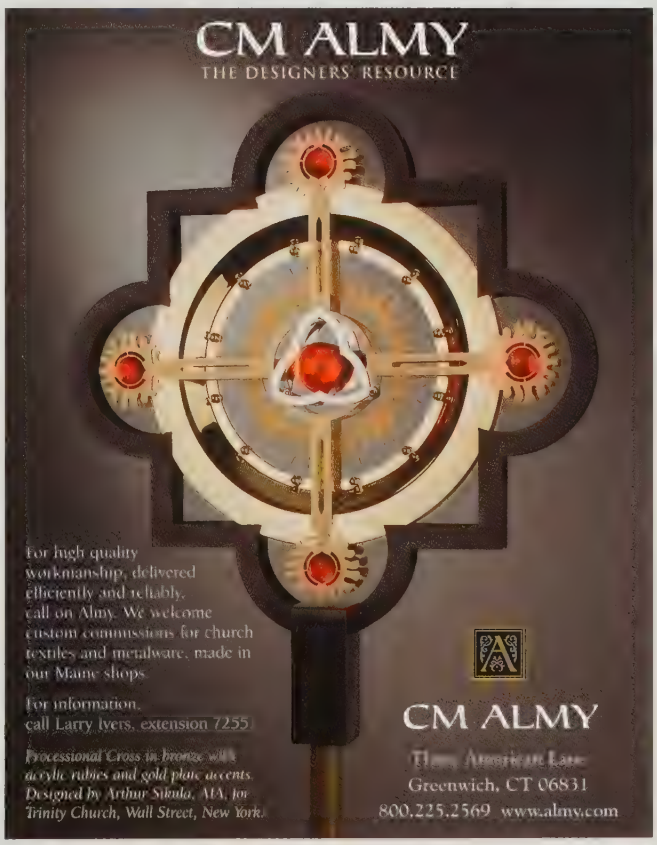
Lessons learned? Every project has its priorities, strengths, and problems. All houses of worship at some time or other find themselves in need of more functional facilities; at the same time they must incorporate efficient fundraising practices. We advocate that fundraisers work more closely with architects and designers.

A poignant success story occurred just recently. We began our relationship with a major Midwestern Jewish congregation prior to the architect's beginning any work and we quickly discovered that the clergy and volunteers were not thinking big enough about renovation and expansion plans. We were able to work hand-in-hand with all parties to develop a dynamic capital project. The result: a responsive transformation of a tired, 45-year-old building into a 21st-century prototype for other congregations.

In another case, we worked with the architectural team to create ideally located recognition walls in a magnificent new addition. Not only were we able to designate a prominent location, but also to incorporate magnificent finishes inset into the brickwork because we worked together in advance, rather than adding plaques almost as an afterthought.

With yet another congregation, we worked with leadership to determine whether to expand its present historic site downtown or to completely relocate to the suburbs. One would have thought from the leadership and clergy meetings that moving would be the most logical and cost-efficient option. However, with our help, extensive town hall meetings and focus groups were conducted involving a diverse section and a large percentage of the congregation. We learned that emotional ties to their magnificent, though aging, house of worship were much stronger than the economic benefits of moving and building a new, contemporary facility. By waiting to hear from the members, the leadership was then able to hire architects to design a building that reflected their dreams and wishes, and we were able to raise an unprecedented amount of financial support for the renovation and construction of expanded and modern facilities.

We hope that our experience and success in helping to fund and build magnificent houses of worship will encourage other design teams and fundraisers to collaborate creatively in making their vision a reality.


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Notes & Comments

Papal Furnishings Designed by "Liturgy Geeks"

John-Paul "JP" Mikolajczyk and Ryan Mullen are graduate students at the School of Architecture and Planning at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. What changed their lives overnight was the commission to design and fabricate the papal altar employed during the Mass celebrated by Pope Benedict XVI at the Nationals Park baseball stadium in Washington, D.C. *(below)*



Photo: Paul Vetters

At the initiative of the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., in January 2008 the School of Architecture at the Catholic University launched a student competition whose goal was to engage young architects in the design and fabrication of several pieces of liturgical furniture to be used during the Pope's visit to the nation's capital. The competition was challenging for several reasons: first, the short time allotted (five days) demanded the ability to make quick decisions and convey ideas in a most compelling way; second, the topic is not a common subject matter in the academic curricula and therefore required serious research.

JP, who has an undergraduate degree in philosophy, and Ryan, who majored in architecture and engineering, have known each other since freshman year. JP gives credit to his friend for entering the competition and providing moral support. In their team, Ryan's practical interest in furniture and woodwork was complemented by JP's background in philosophy, although they both acknowledge being "liturgy geeks," passionate about religious architecture.

The competition handout provided specific requirements for the dimensions and use of the altar, chair, and ambo, and at the same time suggested the themes of the papal visit – hope, renewal, and the Holy Spirit – as potential sources of inspiration. The students found it difficult to incorporate all these ideas into their design and decided to focus on one symbolic meaning: the altar *mensa* as the place of Christ's sacrifice where the five crosses signify the five wounds of Jesus. They spent the first two days researching precedents, liturgical journals, and the furniture in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on the Catholic University campus. The remaining days were dedicated to the conceptual design and production of drawings and models. The entry that captivated the jury presented a hefty *mensa* floating above a light, airy base resembling a delicate filigree. (It was only later that they learned the additional telegenic value of their ideas.)

January 29 is the day they both recall as the one when the results were announced to the public. And it was only then that the real work began. Throughout the next months, a group of faculty from the School of Architecture supported their efforts to develop the design and fabricate the full scale pieces: Dean Randall Ott, Professor John Yanik, Visiting Critic Matthew Geiss, Visiting Critic Mark Lawrence, Visiting Assistant Professor Bill Jelen, and Woodshop Coordinator Ryan McKibbin. The first step was to redefine the patterns on the ambo and altar base to create aesthetic consistency. Simultaneously, for structural and visual reasons, wood, originally envisioned as the dominant material, was replaced by aluminum, which was more appropriate to convey the lightness imagined by the designers. Once the design was completed at the beginning of March, the fabrication process started. The altar mensa was produced in the woodshop of the School of Architecture and the final pieces were assembled in the workshop of Dave Cahoon, a carpenter and Catholic Deacon in Poolesville, Maryland.

The saga of the papal altar reveals a new dimension of architectural education: its increased impact on community life. A territory erstwhile assigned to established professionals, the architectural practice is infused with ideas and solutions spawned by very young generations. Outreach programs and pro bono work in marginal, or more visible communities, are shaping new generations of professionals that understand the value of design and its implications in everyday life.

– Andreea Mihalache, Ph.D.

The writer is a Visiting Assistant Professor at the Catholic University School of Architecture and Planning.



Photo: Carlos Molina

Artist Ronald Neill Dixon of the Dixon Studio of Staunton, Virginia was commissioned by the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, D.C. to create a custom prie dieu** (above) **for the Center's chapel, where Pope Benedict XVI visited on April 17, 2008. Designed to coordinate with the existing pieces in the contemporary space, the kneeler was constructed of American oak and upholstered with a rich red and gold fabric.

Dresden's Frauenkirche: Restored Church of Unity and Hope

Dresden's splendid Frauenkirche is a tribute to human unity, determination, and resilience. This architectural masterpiece of George Baehr was built between 1726 and 1743. The most striking feature was its dome, standing at 314 feet and constructed entirely of sandstone. Questions of the dome's stability were quickly laid to rest during a war with Prussia in 1760. In heavy cannonading, the dome sustained more than 100 direct hits without damage.

The church was built during the reign of August the Strong. As the monarch was Catholic and the church Lutheran, it became a symbol of religious tolerance. This Baroque landmark served the public with more than just religious services. Johann Sebastian Bach, playing the Gottfried Silbermann organ, delighted audiences. For 202 years this Church of our Lady dominated the city of Dresden and its skyline.

In 1940, Germany bombed Coventry, England, which had no military or strategic significance. The Allied forces decided to retaliate for this injustice. Dresden was chosen because of its cultural importance to Germany. On February 13 and 14, 1945, Allied forces dropped 650,000 incendiary bombs on the city. Although the Frauenkirche did not suffer a direct hit, fire caught from the surrounding inferno completely gutted the interior. Weakened wooden piers could no longer support the 12,200-ton dome. On February 15, it collapsed into a pile of rubble.

Within days, resourceful Germans were sorting and cataloguing usable stone, expecting to rebuild Dresden's most renowned symbol. Under East German rule for the next 45 years, however, the church would lie abandoned, a mute testament to man's folly and destruction. Only public determination kept the government from clearing the prized rubble to create a parking lot.

Almost as soon as the Berlin Wall crumbled in October, 1989, hope revived for the Frauenkirche's restoration. A committee was formed, plans made, and construction started. The new structure included two original towers and 3,800 salvaged stones. Restoration quickly became a symbol of unity as people from all over the world came to help. England, former enemy and bomber of Dresden, donated the gilt cross that now crowns the new dome.

The restored church *(right)*, of beautiful tan sandstone, with two patina-blackened towers and a peppering of original stone, once again stands in visible demonstration of human resilience, hope, and reconciliation.

– Arlene Showalter

Arlene Showalter is a freelance writer whose visits to Germany always include exploration of her many magnificent churches.



Noah's Ark Launched

The Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles has opened an engaging exhibit, "Noah's Ark at the Skirball." Inspired by the ancient flood story, which has parallels in hundreds of cultures around the world, this indoor and outdoor attraction offers a multi-sensory, interactive experience. It invites visitors to board a gigantic wooden ark and to play, climb, build, discover, nurture, problem-solve, and collaborate alongside handcrafted, one-of-a-kind animals. These range from life-sized elephants and giraffes to snow leopards, flamingos, and iguanas—186 species in all.

Five years in the making and occupying an 8,000-square-foot gallery, Noah's Ark at the Skirball will remain on view permanently. Affirming that people must work together for a brighter future, Noah's Ark is integral to the Skirball Cultural Center's educational mission to explore Jewish heritage, with the goal of making connections within and among families, generations, and cultures.

article continues on next page



Photo: J. Elder



Photo: Grant Mudford

Front of ark as it fills exhibit space.



Photo: Grant Mudford

Norway rats, designed by architect Alan Maskin of OSKA

The galleries are divided into three distinct and lively zones embodying the central themes of the Noah's Ark story: storms (meeting challenges); arks (finding shelter and community); and rainbows (creating a more hopeful world). The Noah's Ark galleries were designed by Seattle-based Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects (OSKA), in consultation with the Skirball's original architect, Moshe Safdie (the Skirball opened in 1996). They feature interactive exhibits and experiences conceived by an in-house Skirball team, with Marni Gittleman as exhibit developer. The lofty ark spaces are populated with hundreds of fanciful animal puppets and figures, many of them kinetic. These have been created by Brooklyn-based designer/puppeteer Chris M. Green and by OSKA principal Alan Maskin, in conjunction with the fabrication house, Lexington.

Noah's Ark at the Skirball is conceived as a journey, taking visitors on an ark voyage from a stormy world to dry land. Visitors are welcomed into a pre-flood zone, offering hands-on opportunities to make thunder, rain, and wind using low-tech, mechanical sound devices and invented instruments. Upon entering the galleries, visitors mingle with pairs of life-size animal puppets from the five continents, all crafted from recycled materials—or, in many cases, everyday objects such as bottle caps, bicycle parts, baseball mitts, croquet balls, mop heads, and rear-view mirrors. Visitors will help construct a floor-to-ceiling ark, load animals two-by-two, and climb aboard. They will help the animals settle in, unpack shipping crates, climb rafters, feed the animals, clean up the living quarters, and work together to keep everyone on board safely.

For more information about Noah's Ark at the Skirball, visit the Center's website at: www.skirball.org.



Awards Program Deadlines

Submissions to the 2008 *Faith & Form*/ IFRAA International Awards Program for Religious Art and Architecture are welcome. Registration for the program must be completed by July 1, and submissions must be made by July 18. The awards program is open to artists, architects, and designers worldwide. Information on the awards program and registration materials can be found on the *Faith & Form* website at: www.faithandform.com/awards/call_for_entries/index.php. If you have questions, please contact *Faith & Form*'s Trena McClure at tmcclure@faithandform.com, or call her at: 704-927-2253.

IFRAA Conference in Rome

The Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture (IFRAA), which is a knowledge community of the American Institute of Architects, is planning its fall 2008 conference in Rome, Italy. The trip, whose theme is "Masters of Space and Light," is being planned by Donald J. Bruggink and is scheduled for October 11-18, 2008. For more information, visit the IFRAA website: www.aia.org/ifraa.

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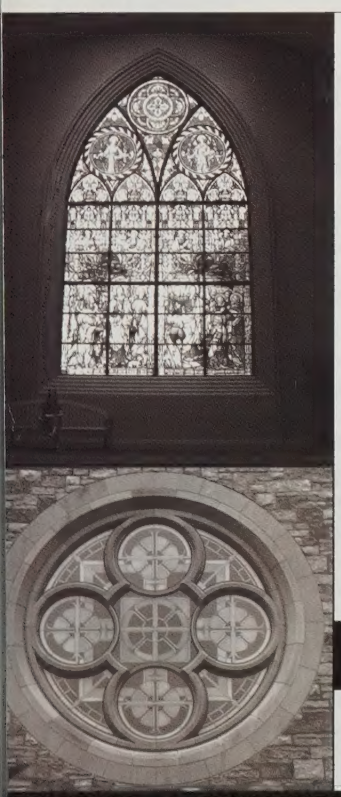
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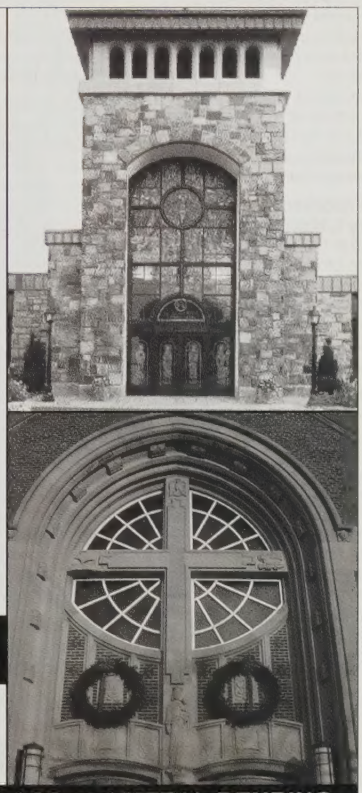
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A New Beginning

Just One More Thing... ✶ Betty H. Meyer

Do you sometimes wonder if others see you as you see yourself? Is their image of you the same as your own? Do you want it to be?

Not long ago I interrupted my reading and looked up the word *humility*. Don't you sometimes feel that we have been too long surrounded by people (not only politicians) who talk about themselves and what they think and feel, ignoring everyone around them? I said the word *humility* aloud and thought, I miss it! It even has a pleasant sound, compared to a word like *egotism*. Why have we lost the attribute of humility?

I don't think it is necessarily true that arrogant individuals lack empathy for others. Maybe they are confused about their own self-image and unconsciously hope that talking about themselves will help others to know them better. To be fair, on the subject of arrogance, I'm sure we who judge others hear echoes of ourselves as we speak.

Naturally, I began to think of artists, architects, *Faith & Form*, and the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture (IFRAA) Do we lack humility? Does our self-image align with how others perceive us? When a building committee meets, do our architects and artists listen to the congregants and do the congregants listen to the architects? I suspect that both feel the need to impress the other, and that humility is not always evident.

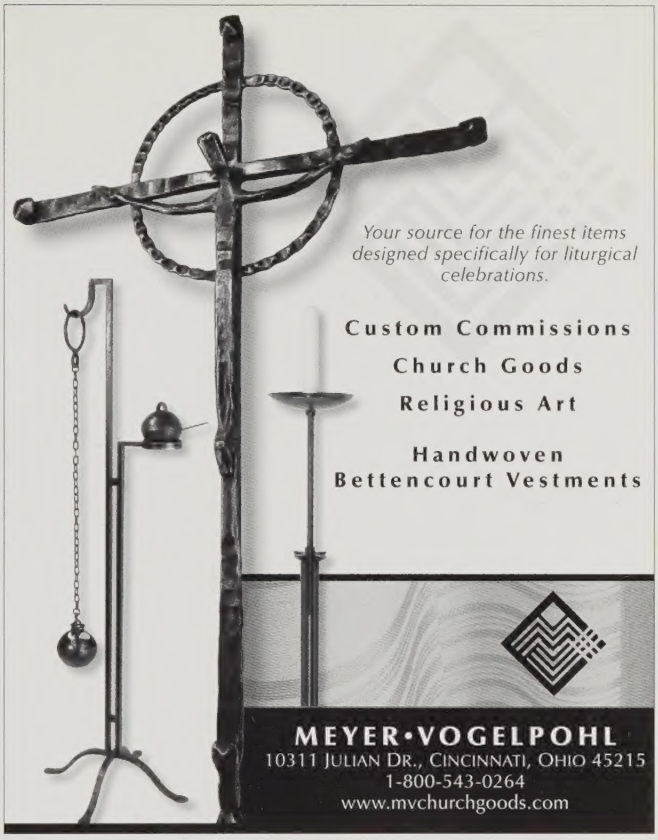
What can we do to help ourselves in such decision-making situations? Must we not realize from the beginning that there are few (if any) absolutes and that initial conclusions often have to be modified or new ones adopted? In order for all members of a group to be heard, we must sometimes become humble; this is not a fault but a virtue.

On my desk is a picture of an ornamental gate designed by the artist Ross Miller. My son used this image for adults in his work with the Boston Schoolyard Initiative, but I think its meaning is applicable to us who are involved in *Faith & Form*, IFRAA, and to anyone who creates sacred spaces. The artist designed a gate or entryway that a child can move through immediately but anyone else cannot until they bend down to the height of a child. They have to be willing to change customary habits before they can continue a relationship with those on the other side. The humility of change gives the visitor new perspectives and also new opportunities to celebrate new viewpoints. Should not creative expression draw from all available sources?

Perhaps a future *Faith & Form* or IFRAA gathering should focus on how to listen and draw forth ideas and information from other participants in a project. Even though we are the trained professionals, is it not our job to help clients realize their own sense of mission through our design work?

Recently, an architect friend of mine mused that some of the best ideas spring from the most unlikely sources. Sometimes a person who has hitherto been quiet offers a suggestion that illuminates like a sudden shaft of sunlight entering a dark room. It's a mystery, really. And mystery always conveys a sense of humility. It helps us transcend our own sense of self, enter the gate, and rejoice in a new beginning.

Betty H. Meyer is Editor Emeritus of *Faith & Form* and can be reached by email at bmeyer@faithandform.com





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